

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 781

By Hardaway

A RESOLUTION to direct the Department of Education to study student access to optional schools and the establishment of optional programs in every school.

WHEREAS, a number of local education agencies across Tennessee operate optional or magnet schools, which draw or attract students and their parents from throughout the school district to comprise the student body of a particular school; and

WHEREAS, the optional schools programs operated by Memphis City Schools includes both schools that operate only as optional schools as well as optional programs that operate as a school-within-a-school at other locations; and

WHEREAS, Memphis City Schools operates 43 optional schools at the elementary, middle school, junior high, and high school levels with a variety of programs, including more intensive or additional courses of study than found in the traditional curriculum and schools that utilize different methods or unique environments; and

WHEREAS, admission to optional schools and optional school programs in Memphis City Schools is highly competitive, with news reports showing hundreds of parents and legal guardians of students spending the night in front of district offices to obtain an application as a result of the "first-come, first-served" criteria being utilized to comprise over 80% of the student body of each school; and

WHEREAS, in addition to providing their own transportation to and from school, prospective optional school students must also meet admission requirements of the optional school they seek to attend, which includes submitting recent report cards and achievement test scores to determine eligibility, or in the case of a first, second, or third grade student, an admittance test will be administered; and

WHEREAS, every year a large number of students who meet all admission requirements and eligibility criteria are unable to gain admittance to an optional school or optional program in the Memphis City Schools; and

WHEREAS, thousands of students who would meet admission requirements are also denied the opportunity to attend an optional school or optional program due to the fact that they cannot provide their own transportation to and from school as the program requires; and

WHEREAS, it is imperative that greater access to an enriched academic experience and optional school program should be available to all children who meet eligibility requirements; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED SIXTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that the Department of Education is hereby directed to study student access to optional schools and programs in Memphis City Schools and the possibility of implementation and expansion of such optional programs to every school within the district.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Department of Education shall report its findings and recommendations to the One Hundred Seventh General Assembly by February 1, 2011.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.